

Summary of Agricultural BMP Advisory Committee Meeting
9:30 AM November 10, 2005 in the
DOF Training Room Charlottesville, VA

The meeting of the Virginia Agricultural BMP Technical Advisory Committee was held on November 10, 2005 in the first floor training room at the Department of Forestry Headquarters Building, Charlottesville, VA. The meeting began at 9:30 AM those members and proxies present included:

Members or Proxies Present:

Jim Tate, Hanover/Caroline SWCD
Glenn Martin, VDACS
Eric Bendfeldt, Ag. Ext.
Sam Johnson, VASWCD Area III Proxy
Gary Moore, DCR SWC
Neil Zahradka, DEQ
Robert Bradford, VASWCD Area II rep

Ken Carter, NRCS
Craig Brann, VASWCDE Assoc.
Wilmer Stoneman, VA Farm Bureau
Van Gallier, DEQ NPS Loans
Wayne Davis DCR CDC
Libby Norris, CBF

Others attending included:

Roy Flanagan, VA Dare SWCD
Frank Bricklehouse, VA DARE SWCD
Bill Shockley VCE ESSWCD

Debbie Cross DCR Warrenton
Jane Corson-Lassiter ESSWCD

- Introductions were made. A motion was made to accept the minutes of the August 8, 2005 meeting, and the motion was carried with the following changes being noted:
 - Craig Brann noted that he is representing the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation District Employee's Association.
 - Robert Bradford was not present at the August meeting.
 - The minutes after noted changes are made will be posted on the DCR Soil and Water Conservation web page (<http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/sw/docs/bmpminutes.pdf>).
- Gary stated that he has learned that one individual cannot adequately perform both chairman and recording duties Wayne Davis and Debbie Cross volunteered to keep notes.

OLD BUSINESS

- Membership
 - Mr. Mark Hollberg, CDC from the DCR Staunton office will replace Mr. Wayne Davis of the Tappahannock office for the next year. This will increase membership from the Shenandoah Valley. Russ Perkinson of DCR will become a regular member representing the Nutrient Management Program. Mr. Steve Calos, new Executive Director of the VASWCD is also recognized as a member.
 - Craig Brann suggested that a SWCD employee from each Association area be present at each meeting. Further discussion led to consensus that the Association Area Chairs should designate a 1st and a 2nd alternate to attend in the event that the Area Chair is unavailable. These alternates could be Directors or employees from within their

areas. This would help keep everyone informed and assure that all areas of the state are aware of issues discussed by the committee, and given an opportunity for input.

- **Buffer Widths**
 - Robert Bradshaw noted that his district is finding that the expansion of buffer width from 25' to 35' is reducing the number of operators that are willing to implement stream exclusion practices. The tax credit for exclusionary fence with no required setback is not enough incentive to get operators to participate when the operators believe that 35' is too wide. A discussion of the reasons for the 35' setback ensued. There are dozens of studies that suggest that NPS treatment by a buffer requires at least 35', and this is the minimum width for CREP and the Chesapeake Bay Program credits.
 - It was suggested that a varying cost-share rate based upon the width of the buffer might be worth considering. No action Taken.
- **Portable Scales for Cost-share**
 - Eric Benefeldt suggested again that portable scales should be eligible for cost-share funding. Gary reported that he attended an innovative agriculture demonstration in Staunton, where portable scales were acquired through grant funding and stationed regionally for operator use. Gary will contact the Headwaters SWCD and ask them about their findings and if the scales were used mainly for production or water quality benefit. No action taken.
- The joint letter, signed by Gary Moore and John Myers, clarifying aerial seeding for the SL-8B practice was distributed and discussed. The bottom line is that the practice is about maintaining winter cover, and if aerial seeding does that, fine, however if the specified cover is not established ("60% cover maintained") the operator cannot be paid. An unsuccessful seeding effort will not be cost-shared.
- The joint letter, signed by Jack Frye and Denise Doetzer, clarifying the use of the SL-6 winter feeding pad, the WP-4 roofed winter feeding facility and WP-4B Loose-Housing (Pack Barn), and disallowing flash grazing as a management tool for riparian buffers as of July 2006 was distributed and discussed. NRCS will distribute to all field staff. DCR will e-mail to All-District list serve, and mail a hard copy to all Board Chairmen.

(New Business item rescheduled to accommodate presenter)

- Jane Corson-Lassiter of the Eastern Shore SWCD presented several suggestions for new cost-share practices, based upon grower interest and discussions with Delmarva Poultry Integrators:

Proposed New Practices

- Provide cost-share eligibility for incinerators for disposal of poultry mortality.
 - Reduces rodent problems and enhances bio-security.
 - Cost \$3K to \$7K with a 5 to 7 year life span.
- Provide cost-share eligibility to retrofit concrete aprons across the front of older houses and stacking sheds to contain spilled and tracked litter and improve cleanup. (Aprons are standard on new houses.)

- DEQ has recommended 12' x 14' concrete aprons to reduce litter scatter from tires.
- Provide cost-share eligibility for vegetative buffers behind poultry house exhaust fans.
 - Univ. Of Delaware studies shows 50% reductions in particulates and atmospheric ammonia when filtered through 3 rows of vegetation.

Proposed Revisions to Existing Practices

- Extend WQ-4 planting dates from October 15 Seeding Date to November 1 for Eastern Shore and Cities of Chesapeake and Virginia Beach.
- Add Rye/Vetch seed mix to planting options under WQ-4 to extend planting season.
- Extend SL-8B planting date from existing November 15 Late Planting Date, to November 25 for Eastern Shore (Include Eastern Shore in cities of Chesapeake and Virginia Beach micro-climate area).

All of the above proposals were referred to a sub-committee composed of:

Ken Carter, Neil Zahradka, Eric Benefeldt, Gary Moore, and Jim Tate

- Report on activities of the Cover Crop Subcommittee; Craig Brann
 - SL-8B revisions to the one year practice to include clarifications about winter cereal rye, and
 - Working on SL-8C, Three Year Cover Crop contract, pay yearly; utilize contractual obligations to insure funding increases for the cost-share program.
 - Gary Moore working on straw man that enrolls acres rather than tracts and fields, and pays yearly increases for keeping acres in contract.
 - Summaries of cover crop meetings were made available for Advisory Committee review.
- Report on WQI and EI as qualifiers for Cost-Share Program Eligibility
 - Written recommendation from Karl Huber about use of WQI and EI as eligibility criteria. The EI is tied to soil and average slopes, and expected rainfall. The WQI has a component of land use based upon 1981-91 usages. Hydrologic Unit boundaries are currently being completely relocated nationwide and will render any new analysis that DCR could do presently useless when completed in 2006. Therefore, Karl recommends keeping the EI & WQI as is until new HU boundaries are completed.
 - **The committee reached consensus that the language on page II-6 be changed for program year 2007 manual to remove “under appropriate conditions the following practices may also be exceptions”, this will result in one list of excepted practices.**

NEW BUSINESS

- Revision to SL-6 and WP-2 practice specifications to include prohibition of flash grazing as buffer management option.
 - Committee authorized Gary to make changes to be presented at the next meeting.

- Lower Rappahannock Initiative: A forester has been hired to promote buffer restoration in the Lower Rappahannock Watershed. Rand Robinson (new forester) is stationed at the DoF Tappahannock Regional office. A marketing action plan has been developed to specifically target operations where buffers are needed. One of the first actions to be accomplished is the printing of appropriate buffer oriented fact sheets previously developed to address specific management concerns.
- General Assembly Analysis of Effectiveness of Cost-Share Program: The steering committee has met for the last time and has a draft document subject to Mr. Maroon's review and comments for submittal by the end of the calendar year.
- The next meeting of the Ag. BMP Technical Advisory Committee was set for March 29th in the Shenandoah Valley. Eric Bendfeldt has arranged for the committee to meet in the Virginia Cooperative Extension Northwest District Office Conference Room.
Driving Directions: From I-81: Take Exit 247A toward Elkton--merging onto US-33 East/East, Market Street. Go through 4 lights, and then turn right onto Chestnut Ridge Drive. Turn right onto Blue Stone Hills Drive. At the second brick office building on your right, turn right into the lower level parking lot. We are in the lower level, 1st door on your right when you enter the building--Suite 140.

Unfortunately the Innovative Nutrient Solutions Expo and State Dairy Conservation Field Day originally scheduled for March 28th has been rescheduled for April 5, 2006.

AGENCY UPDATES

- Eric Bendfeldt provided a calendar of upcoming field days and events sponsored by VT Ag. Extension.